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STAN LEE PRESENTS
K'HAT!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER TWENTY YEARS, THE HALL OF THE MONASTERY AT KAMAR-TAJ IS FILLED WITH CHANTING MONKS.
IT HAS BEEN THAT LONG SINCE THEIR MASTER DIED, AND THE SEARCH FOR HIS NEW AVATAR HAD BEEN LONG AND ARDUOUS. WITH THE AID OF DR. STRANGE IT WAS SUCCESSFUL.
BUT NOW THE AVATAR SITS BEFORE THEM, GAZING OUT AT THEM WITH NEW EYES THAT ARE YET OLD AS MOUNTAINS--AND THE MURMURING MUSIC IS FILLED WITH JOY.

peter	chris	randy	bob	janice	carl	jim
GILLIS	**WARNER**	**EMBERLIN**	**SHAREN**	**CHIANG**	**POTTS**	**SHOOTER**
SCRIPTER	**PENCILER**	**INKER**	**COLORIST**	**LETTERER**	**EDITOR**	**EDITOR IN CHIEF**

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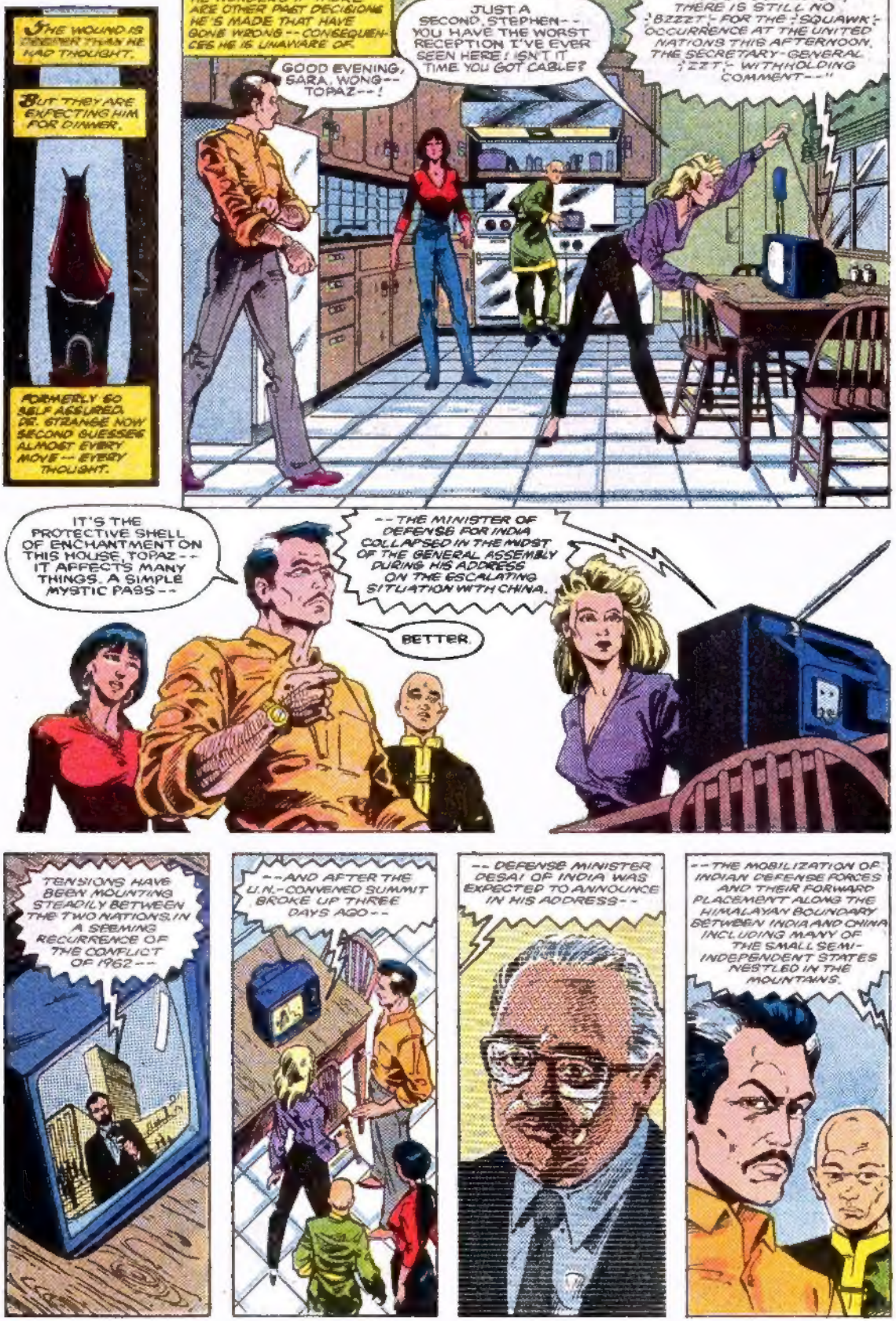
ONE NOVICE HAD BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE CEREMONY--FOR AS A PUNISHMENT, HE HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO TEND--
--THE SATELLITE DISH THEIR NEW LEADER HAD HAD INSTALLED.
MOST HOLY! MOST HOLY!
WHAT SACRILEGE IS THIS? TO INTERRUPT--
MOST HOLY, I BRING DREADFUL NEWS--
STEP FORWARD--
--AND TELL ME ABOUT IT. AND THE NAME'S ARNIE GREEN, NOT "MOST HOLY".
OH MOST HOLY, THE NEWS IS TERRIBLE! WE ARE TO BE OCCUPIED! THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IS SENDING SOLDIERS TO BE GARRISONED HERE!
BUT THAT'S CRAZY! WHO TOLD THEM THEY COULD DO THAT? WHAT'S THEIR JUSTIFICATION?
RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA WORSEN, MOST HOLY, AND THE HIMALAYAS HAVE BECOME SENSITIVE GROUND. AND AS WE ARE A PROTECTORATE OF INDIA, THE SOLDIERS COME.
SO SPEAKS THE INDIAN MINISTER OF DEFENSE. MOST HOLY, HE ADDRESSES THE UNITED NATIONS TONIGHT TO TELL THE WORLD OF THIS.
WE ARE SO SMALL, MOST HOLY--WITH NO ARMY. IF HE SAYS THERE WILL BE SOLDIERS--THERE WILL BE SOLDIERS.
OF ALL THE HIGH-HANDED, ARROGANT--

CURSE THE MAN!
MOST HOLY--I HESITATE TO SPEAK--BUT YOUR WORDS WERE ILL-CHOSEN, FOR THE HIGH LAMA TO UTTER SUCH A CURSE HERE--IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES--
JEEZ, I'M SORRY! EVEN THOUGH I KNOW WHO I AM NOW, THERE ARE ALL THESE AMERICAN INSTINCTS I WAS RAISED WITH I'VE GOT TO WATCH!
FORGIVE ME, PLEASE--
--I HAVE MUCH TO LEARN--TO RE-LEARN.
THE CEREMONY RESUMES--BUT ONE OF THE MYRIAD CANDLES IN THE CHAMBER--
--ABRUPTLY GOES OUT.
AND A FAINT ODOR OF DECAY WAFTS FROM THE RISING SMOKE.

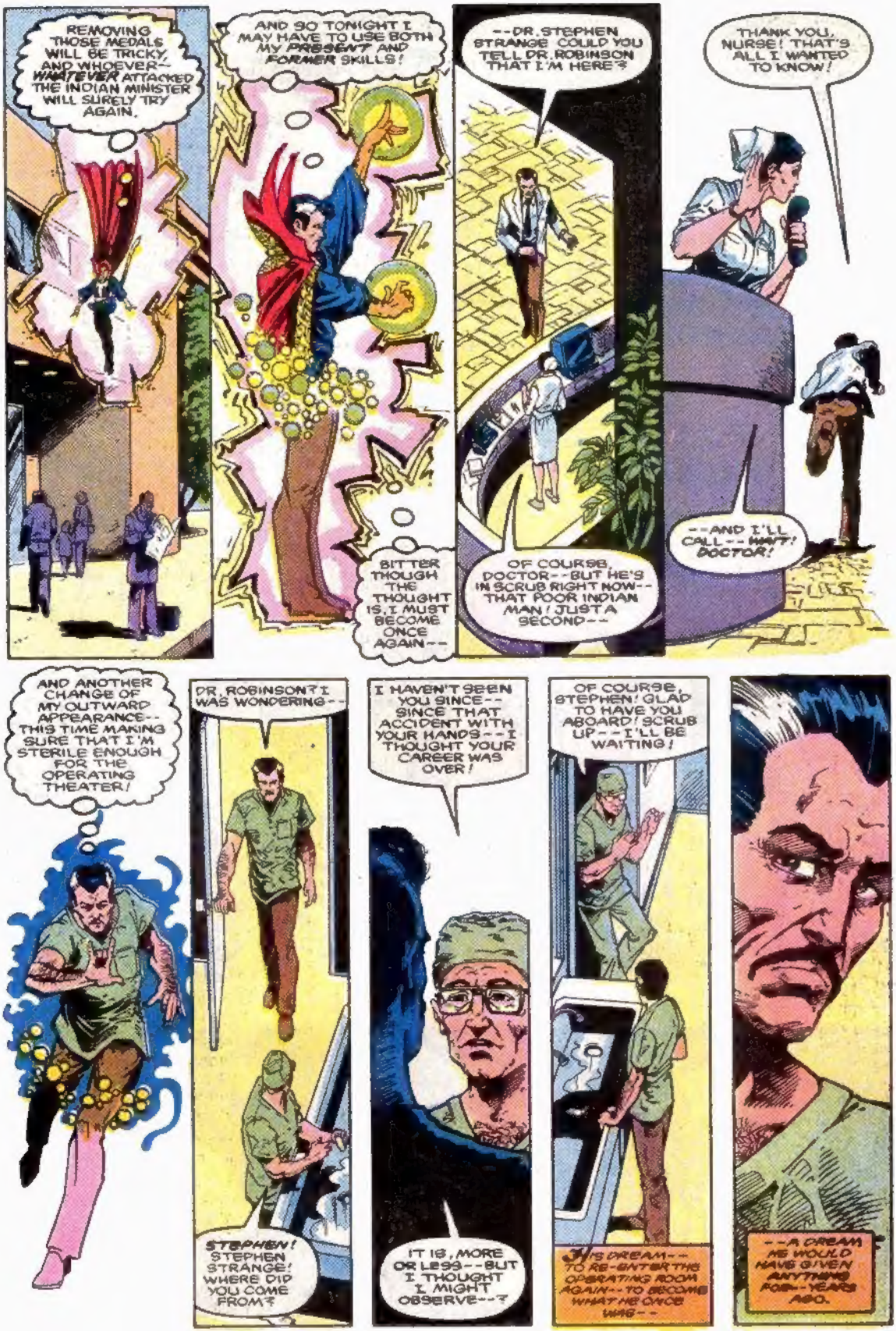
GREENWICH VILLAGE, NEW YORK CITY. 177A BLEECKER STREET.
IT IS THE QUIET HOME OF STEPHEN STRANGE, AN EX-SURGEON--
--AND THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF DR. STRANGE, THIS PLANE'S MOST POWERFUL SORCEROR.
HE FLOATS IN HIS POSITION OF MEDITATION. HIS EYES ARE SHUT--HIS BREATHING CONTROLLED AND SLOW---
--BUT NOTHING CAN STOP THE CHURNING OF HIS THOUGHTS.
FOR HE--- THIS MIGHTY MAGICIAN--- IS GREATLY TROUBLED BY MEMORIES.
EVERY WOMAN HE HAS KNOWN-- VICTORIA BENTLEY, MORGANNA BLESSING, SARA WOLF, EVEN CLEA, WHO LIVED WITH HIM FOR SO LONG-- HE HAS HELD THEM AT ARMS' LENGTH.
AND WHEN THE WOMAN TOPAZ KISSED HIM WITH UNEXPECTED FERVOR--HE RECOILED! RECOILED BOTH IN BODY AND SPIRIT!
A MINOR CONCERN--THE SORT OF NIGGLING WORRY UNWORTHY OF A MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, TO BE SURE--
--AND YET-- HIS CONFUSION COST A MAN'S LIFE.

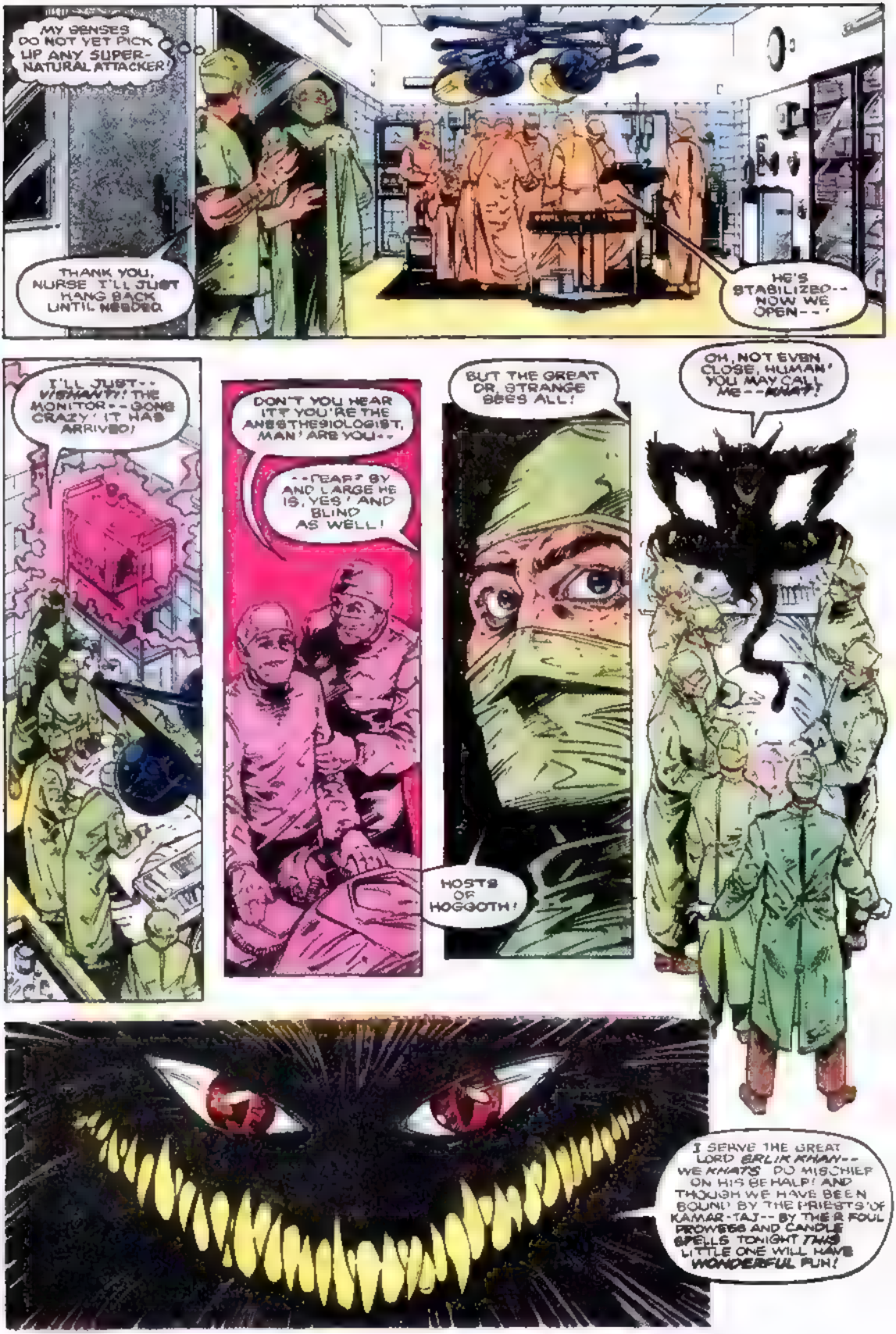
BY EVERY CRITERION HE KNEW, HIS FRIEND DARRYL BERENSON WAS NOT IN LOVE--MERELY ENSORCELED BY THE DEMONESS IURIALE *--AND SO DR. STRANGE BROKE HER SPELL. BERENSON SHOULD HAVE RECOVERED--NOT KILLED HIMSELF IN PASSION AND DESPAIR.
BUT, STRANGE WONDERS--DO ANY OF HIS CRITERIA REALLY MATTER? HE DENIED DARRYL THE THING HE WANTED MOST.
HAS DR. STRANGE BECOME THE FOE OF LOVE?
* SEE LAST ISSUE.
DOES HE WRAP HIMSELF IN SHADOW, A STONE-FACED ASCETIC, NEVER TOUCHING AND NEVER TOUCHED?
NO. I WON'T BE THAT--AND I WON'T BE SEEN AS THAT.
THE ORB OF AGAMOTTO'S POWERS STEM FROM NECROMANCY--MAGIC THROUGH THE DEAD. I KNOW ITS PATHWAYS--DOWN WHICH DARRYL FLED IN PAIN.*
* DR. STRANGE "DIED" IN ISSUE #4--AND RETURNED IN ISSUE #6.
I MIGHT JUST BE ABLE TO REACH HIM--TELL HIM--HEAL THE WOUND--
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO--
NO!
WHAT HAD HE BEEN THINKING OF?
HE KNEW IT WOULDN'T HAVE WORKED.
TO EVEN TRY WOULD HAVE BROKEN ONE OF HIS MOST DREAD VOWS!


THE WOUND IS DEEPER THAN HE HAD THOUGHT.
BUT THEY ARE EXPECTING HIM FOR DINNER.
FORMERLY SO SELF ASSURED, DR. STRANGE NOW SECOND GUESSES ALMOST EVERY MOVE -- EVERY THOUGHT.
HE WONDERS IF THERE ARE OTHER PAST DECISIONS HE'S MADE THAT HAVE GONE WRONG -- CONSEQUENCES HE IS UNAWARE OF.
JUST A SECOND, STEPHEN -- YOU HAVE THE WORST RECEPTION I'VE EVER SEEN HERE! ISN'T IT TIME YOU GOT CABLE?
GOOD EVENING, SARA, WONG -- TOPAZ --!
-- JUST JOINED US, THERE IS STILL NO 'BZZZT' FOR THE 'SQUAWK' OCCURRENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS THIS AFTERNOON. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL 'ZZT' WITHHOLDING COMMENT --"
IT'S THE PROTECTIVE SHELL OF ENCHANTMENT ON THIS HOUSE, TOPAZ -- IT AFFECTS MANY THINGS. A SIMPLE MYSTIC PASS --
-- THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE FOR INDIA COLLAPSED IN THE MIDST OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DURING HIS ADDRESS ON THE ESCALATING SITUATION WITH CHINA.
BETTER.
TENSIONS HAVE BEEN MOUNTING STEADILY BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, IN A SEEMING RECURRENCE OF THE CONFLICT OF 1962 --
-- AND AFTER THE U.N.-CONVENED SUMMIT BROKE UP THREE DAYS AGO --
-- DEFENSE MINISTER DESAI OF INDIA WAS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE IN HIS ADDRESS --
-- THE MOBILIZATION OF INDIAN DEFENSE FORCES AND THEIR FORWARD PLACEMENT ALONG THE HIMALAYAN BOUNDARY BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA INCLUDING MANY OF THE SMALL SEMI-INDEPENDENT STATES NESTLED IN THE MOUNTAINS.

BUT HALFWAY THROUGH THE MINISTER'S ADDRESS, AS HE INVOKED THE TAKEOVER AND JAWAKH AND AKISA CHAI, AND BEGAN TO NAME THE COUNTRIES THE FORCES WOULD BE OCCUPYING, HE SUDDENLY CLUTCHED HIS THROAT AND COLLAPSED.
WHEN ATTENDANTS RUSHED TO HIM, IT WAS FOUND HIS MOUTH AND MUCH OF HIS THROAT AND BRONCHAL TUBES WERE JAMMED--WITH MILITARY MEDALS!
HAHAHAHA! OUTRAGEOUS!
TOPAZ! HOW COULD YOU? THAT MAN MAY BE DYING!
YOU'RE RIGHT-- WHAT WAS I THINKING? THAT POOR MAN--!
I--I'M SORRY, SARA--BUT SINCE I LOST THE HALF OF MY SOUL THAT CONTAINED MY SELF-RESTRAINT, I'VE BEEN--IT'S SO HORRIBLE--!
PLEASE, TOPAZ-- IT'S ALL RIGHT--!
IT'S NOT ALL RIGHT--THAT POOR MAN--AND I'M NOTHING BUT A MONSTER--A MONSTER--
TOPAZ-- DON'T--

BRRRING!
I WILL ANSWER THE PHONE, SARA--
THAT POOR, POOR MAN--!
YES, THAT IS RIGHT--MR. GREEN? YES, THE MASTER HAS SPOKEN OF YOU--WHY YES, HE IS RIGHT--
--HERE?
THE FOOLS! MANKIND THINKS ITSELF SO ADEPT AT WAR AND VIOLENCE--
--WHEN THERE ARE BEINGS JUST THIS SIDE OF A DREAM INFINITELY MORE VIOLENT.
FROM THE U.N., A MEDICAL EMERGENCY WOULD BE TAKEN TO--
--THE LENOX HILL MEDICAL CENTER--JUST BELOW ME!


REMOVING THOSE MEDALS WILL BE TRICKY, AND WHOEVER--WHATEVER ATTACKED THE INDIAN MINISTER WILL SURELY TRY AGAIN.
AND SO TONIGHT I MAY HAVE TO USE BOTH MY PRESENT AND FORMER SKILLS!
BITTER THOUGH THE THOUGHT IS, I MUST BECOME ONCE AGAIN--
--DR. STEPHEN STRANGE COULD YOU TELL DR. ROBINSON THAT I'M HERE?
OF COURSE, DOCTOR--BUT HE'S IN SCRUB RIGHT NOW--THAT POOR INDIAN MAN! JUST A SECOND--
THANK YOU, NURSE! THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO KNOW!
--AND I'LL CALL--WAIT! DOCTOR!
AND ANOTHER CHANGE OF MY OUTWARD APPEARANCE--THIS TIME MAKING SURE THAT I'M STERILE ENOUGH FOR THE OPERATING THEATER!
DR. ROBINSON? I WAS WONDERING--
STEPHEN! STEPHEN STRANGE! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE--SINCE THAT ACCIDENT WITH YOUR HANDS--I THOUGHT YOUR CAREER WAS OVER!
IT IS, MORE OR LESS--BUT I THOUGHT I MIGHT OBSERVE--?
OF COURSE, STEPHEN! GLAD TO HAVE YOU ABOARD! SCRUB UP--I'LL BE WAITING!
HIS DREAM--TO RE-ENTER THIS OPERATING ROOM AGAIN--TO BECOME WHAT HE ONCE WAS--
--A DREAM HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING FOR--YEARS AGO.


MY SENSES DO NOT YET PICK UP ANY SUPER-NATURAL ATTACKER!
THANK YOU, NURSE I'LL JUST HANG BACK UNTIL NEEDED.
HE'S STABILIZED-- NOW WE OPEN--!
I'LL JUST-- VISHANTI! THE MONITOR--GONE CRAZY! IT HAS ARRIVED!
DON'T YOU HEAR IT? YOU'RE THE ANESTHESIOLOGIST, MAN! ARE YOU--
--FEAR? BY AND LARGE HE IS, YES! AND BLIND AS WELL!
BUT THE GREAT DR. STRANGE SEES ALL!
HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!
OH, NOT EVEN CLOSE, HUMAN! YOU MAY CALL ME--KHAT?
I SERVE THE GREAT LORD ERLIK KHAN-- WE KHATS DO MISCHIEF ON HIS BEHALF! AND THOUGH WE HAVE BEEN BOUND BY THE PRIESTS OF KAMAR-TAJ-- BY THEIR FOUL PROWESS AND CANDLE SPELLS TONIGHT THIS LITTLE ONE WILL HAVE WONDERFUL FUN!

AND YOU, DR. STRANGE -- HAVE YOU COME TO HELP ME -- OR JUST TO SEE ANOTHER MASTER AT WORK?
EITHER WAY I'M FLATTERED -- SO I'LL ASK YOUR ADVICE!
I'VE ALREADY DECIDED THAT HIS HEART WILL BE NEXT -- SO TELL ME --
-- DO YOU THINK TURNING IT TO TIN WOULD BE A NICE TOUCH? HMM?
HSSSSSSSS!
FROM HIS CHEST! WHAT --?
THEY ARE THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORRAK, DEMON -- AND THEY SHALL PROTECT THE MAN FROM YOUR FIENDISH ATTACK!
SO!

YOU AMAZE ME--I WAS DOING THIS AT THE REQUEST OF A FRIEND OF YOURS! WHY CAN'T YOU HUMANS AGREE ON ANYTHING?
DON'T USE YOUR GIBBERISH ON ME, DEMON--YOUR WOULD-BE VICTIM IS SAFE AND WILL REMAIN SO AS LONG AS DR STRANGE ENDURES!
IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, MAGICIAN--
SHWP!
HE'S GONE! BUT WHERE--
EEYYAAAAA!!
THAT SCREAM--IT'S AS IF--
--ALL THE SUFFERING IN THIS HOSPITAL--
--HAD BEEN RELEASED AT--

--ONCE! WHERE IS HE? THE ORB OF AGAMOTO SHOWS NOTHING!
AND YET-- THOSE SCREAMS! WHAT WOULDN'T! THEY'VE DONE NOTHING!
--HE'S ATTACKED EVERY PATIENT IN THE HOSPITAL!
BUT HE HAS! TO GET AT ME--
I'M DYING! HELP ME! HELP MEEEE--!
KHAT SHALL PAY FOR THIS! MY AMULET'S UNBLINKING EYE WILL FIND HIM--
"-- AND I WILL MAKE HIM PAY!"
THEY ARE ALL DYING-- BUT STRANGE CAN'T STOP!
AND IN THE MEANTIME A WOMAN COVERED IN SORES IS DYING OF CONVULSIONS--!
THEY ARE ALL DYING-- BUT HE CAN'T--
--BUT HE CAN'T--

"YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND-- I'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX-- TEEN HOURS STRAIGHT-- I CAN'T DO THIS ANY MORE!"
HE'S NOT RESPONDING, ROBINSON-- THAT MAKES THE THIRD WE'VE LOST TONIGHT--!
THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE WE COULD HAVE DONE, STEPHEN.
I CAN'T DO IT ROBINSON-- I CAN'T WATCH ANY MORE PEOPLE DIE UNDER MY HANDS I CAN'T BRING MYSELF--
--TO WHAT STEPHEN?
I'VE GONE NUMB, ROBINSON BY ALL THAT'S RIGHT, I SHOULD FEEL BAD OR ANGRY, OR SOMETHING BUT I-- I--I JUST FEEL IRRITATED!
ROBINSON I CAN'T CARE ANY MORE...
AND I CAN'T TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY
SPOKEN WITH HIS OWN VOICE--
--NOT SO VERY LONG AGO.
AND THEY SCREAM AS WOUNDS OPEN AS JETS HEMORRHAGE, AS SURVIVORS GRIP THEIR LIVES--
WHAT?
--AND YOU STILL CAN'T CARE, CAN YOU?
YOU'VE FOUND AN OUT STRANGE-- SORCERERS ARE ONLY CONCERNED WITH BIG THINGS, AREN'T THEY? NOT TAWDRY LITTLE PEOPLE--
--WHO HAVE THIS WRETCHED HABIT OF DYING?
YOU WERE COLD AND ARROGANT AS A SURGEON, STEPHEN-- BUT I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU--
--YOU'RE JUST AS COLD AND ARROGANT AS A MAGICIAN YOU WALTZ IN SOMEWHERE, WAVE YOUR HANDS AND THEN LEAVE-- FIGURING YOU'VE FIXED IT ALL FINE AND DANDY, ARROGANT AND COLD.
THAT'S NOT TRUE!
SURE IT IS. THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T LOVE. ANY NO ONE REALLY LOVES YOU! ASK STRANGE--

--I'VE HIT HOME, HAVEN'T I?
I'VE GOT YOU!!!!
YAAAAHHHHHHH!

I WAS A FOOL! I ALLOWED MY PRIVATE DOUBTS TO INTRUDE TO THE POINT THAT I LET MY GUARD DOWN! AND BECAUSE OF THAT BLUNDER, I M--"
NO--!
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO CARE-LESS? LET KHAT [illegible] ME--PULL ME HERE?
--FAR WORSE OFF THAN BEFORE, STRANGE!
A LITTLE DEMON SUCH AS I COULD NEVER HOPE TO BEAT THE MIGHTY DR STRANGE--BUT YOU'VE BEEN WOUNDED! WEAKENED NOW I HAVE THE UPPER HAND!
YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEARN WHAT IT IS TO THWART A KHAT--SO SAVOR THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU BROUGHT MOST OF THIS ON YOURSELF!
OF COURSE, I'LL DO THE REST!
SUFFER, DR STRANGE!

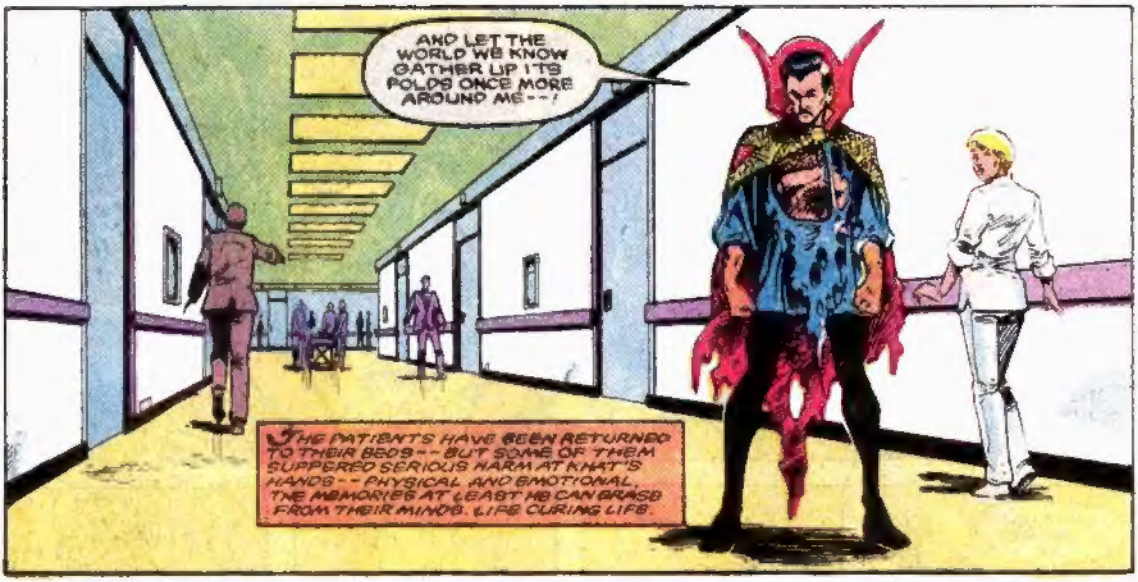
AGAINST THE SEARING BLAST HE CAN ONLY WRAP HIMSELF IN THE CLOAK OF LEVITATION AND BID IT BEAR HIM AWAY-
--BUT IN THE BLAST ARE A THOUSAND SCREAMING VOICES--AND THEY ALL CRY OUT "DR STRANGE!"
AND ALL HE CAN FEEL IS IRRITATION! WHY SHOULD HE SAVE THEM? WHY DOES HE ALWAYS HAVE TO SAVE EVERYONE?
OH NO YOU DON'T! ESCAPE ISN'T THAT EASY!
I LIKE TO PLAY WITH THE THINGS I'M ABOUT TO KILL!
YOU--DEMON--YOU SHALL NOT--I'LL--
OH DO GO AHEAD, DOCTOR! UNLEASH YOUR MYSTIC MIGHT UNPARALLELED!
I--
WHAT'S THE MATTER? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?
YOU HAVE NO POWERS, STRANGE - ONLY THE KNOWLEDGE OF SPELLS AND THE TRAINING TO USE THEM!
BUT SEE HOW YOUR HANDS TREMBLE!
YOUR MIND WHIRLS--YOU ARE CONFUSED--NO KNOWLEDGE--NO SPELLS--NO GESTURES COME!
YOU'VE GONE NUMB, SORCERER, WITHOUT FEELING YOUR HANDS FAIL YOU NOW, THEY DID WHEN YOU WERE A SURGEON!

YOU WILL DIE BEWILDERED, DR STRANGE!
BEFORE HIM STANDS, THE TORMENTOR-- A WARRIOR OF THE MIND, IT HAD AT TACKED HIM AT HIS WEAKEST POINTS
AND HE HAD FOUGHT BY DENYING THEM.
IS IT TRUE? IS HE EVERY-THING THE DEMON SAID?
AND IF IT IS TRUE-- WHAT OF DR STRANGE-- HIS DEDICATION-- HIS MISSION-- HIS LIFE?
STOP! PLEASE-- YOU'RE RIGHT-- IT'S ALL TRUE!
IT'S TRUE-- IT'S ALL TRUE! I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO FEEL-- TO LOVE--
--I'M NOTHING--!
A GOOD START STRANGE--
BUT BELIEVE ME, THAT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING!

THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS IN THE WORLD, STRANGE--NO UNDERSTANDING--NO REFUGE IN BEING NOTHING--ONLY *PUNISHMENT* ON *PUNISHMENT*--
--UNTIL *EVERYTHING* HAS BEEN DESTROYED!
THE CLOAK--!

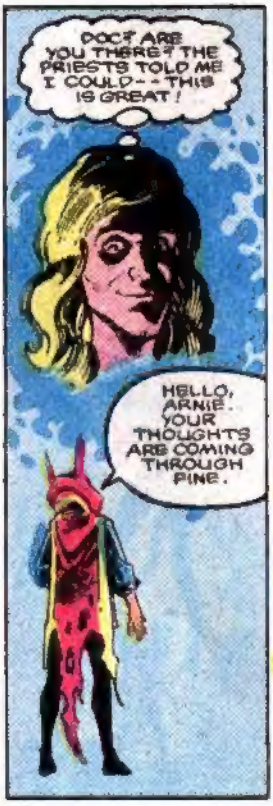
NO--THE CLOAK MY MENTOR ENTRUSTED IT TO ME--YOU'VE DESTROYED IT--!
AND YOU LET ME, STRANGE! LET ME, BECAUSE YOU'RE A GUILTY CLAMMY LITTLE SLUG!
YOU COULD BE POWERFUL, HUMAN--BUT INSTEAD YOU SNIVEL AND WHINE ABOUT OTHER NASTY HUMAN LIVES--YOU CAN'T SAVE THEM. WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?
YOU'RE RIGHT--I'M WEAK--
--BUT I HAVE TO HURT-- I HAVE TO KNOW WHAT WOUNDS ME--
--BECAUSE BY ADMITTING MY WEAKNESSES, I ALSO LEARN MY STRENGTHS--

--AND THAT IS WHY I WILL TRIUMPH-- LITTLE DEMON.
NO! NO! NSSSSS!
HSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
BY THE FALTINE'S RISING FLAME-- BY ORLANNON'S EMPTY PYRE--
SSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
BACK YOU GO WHENCE YOU CAME-- BOUND AGAIN BY SACRED FIRE!
NOW LET THIS SEEMING BE DISPELLED--


AND LET THE WORLD BE KNOW GATHER UP 'TS FOLDS ONCE MORE AROUND ME--!
THE PATIENTS HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO THEIR BEDS-- BUT SOME OF THEM SUFFERED SERIOUS HARM AT KHAT'S HANDS-- PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL. THE MEMORIES AT LEAST HE CAN GRASP FROM THEIR MINDS. LIFE CURING LIFE.

IT WAS ALL TOO REAL-- ALL OF IT.
BY ADMITTING HIS WEAKNESS HE OVERMOUNTED IT-- AND SO MUSTERED ENOUGH POWER TO BEAT KHAT--

--BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT HE WAS EVEN WEAK. COLD. ALOOF. IRRESPONSIBLE!
THROUGH HIS PAIN, HE HAS TRIUMPHED-- BUT THE PAIN IS STILL THERE.


DOC? ARE YOU THERE? THE PRIESTS TOLD ME I COULD-- THIS IS GREAT!
HELLO, ARNIE. YOUR THOUGHTS ARE COMING THROUGH FINE.

LISTEN, I HAVE TO APOLOGIZE! I LOST MY HEAD-- I LET MY GOOD OL' AMERICAN PASSIONS RUN AWAY WITH ME-- AND I BROUGHT ALL THIS TROUBLE.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I-- OR THE PRIESTHOOD-- CAN DO--?
NO, ARNIE-- EVERYTHING'S BEEN-- MENDED AS WELL AS CAN BE.

I GUESS I'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT MYSELF, HUH, DOC?
AS DO WE ALL, ARNIE. AS DO WE ALL.